

ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE A-7

WASHINGTON POST  
24 April 1984

# Reagan Worsening Latin Conflicts,

By Bill Peterson  
Washington Post Staff Writer

## Mondale Says

Democratic presidential candidate Walter F. Mondale yesterday charged that Reagan administration policies "are leading in a direction that can involve the use of U.S. combat troops in Central America."

Mondale, noting a growing level of U.S. involvement in the region during the last three years, said Reagan policies "are Americanizing, militarizing and widening the dispute in Central America," adding, "Things are getting worse all the time."

Mondale said he expects President Reagan's conduct of foreign policy in the Mideast and Central America to be "big issues" during the presidential campaign this fall, adding that they have "led clearly to a less safe world."

"There's a steady pattern here of a president who's not in charge and he's not leading," he said in a meeting with Washington Post editors and reporters.

Mondale condemned CIA covert actions in Nicaragua, describing them as "counterproductive." He said the administration has an "exaggerated notion of what can be done through covert actions" and has put the nation in the position of "playing games with the truth."

The administration, he added, "in some sentimental way wants to restore the day when they thought you could have your way with a trench-coat, when you can't have it any other way."

He staunchly defended the two congressional committees that oversee CIA activities. "If you did away with those two committees or the reporting, you'd really be in trouble, because the fact of it is that you don't get away for long with things without reporting to those committees or without the committees knowing about it."

He said the reason that the system appeared to break down recently is that CIA Director William J. Casey has a "fairly limp notion of his

responsibilities to the Congress in terms of reporting."

The system, he added, "should work clearly better than it is, but the institutional basis there is a very important thing to build on and not to lose confidence in."

As vice president in the Carter administration, Mondale said he thought he "knew most everything" that the CIA was doing. He said he believes in "a strong CIA" and that there are times when covert actions are necessary.

If elected president, he said, he would fire Casey and replace him with someone with "a sense of history and understanding and professionalism."

Repeating statements he has frequently made on the campaign trail, Mondale said he would also remove combat troops from Honduras, while continuing military assistance to that nation; "severely limit" U.S. aid to El Salvador unless there are improvements in human rights, and "try very hard to work to strengthen what's left of the moderate center" throughout the region.

He charged that "about 50 or 40 percent" of arms and military equipment sent by the U.S. government to El Salvador "ends up on the other side," a claim the Reagan administration has denied.

He said that as president he would try to resolve problems in the region through negotiations. Asked how successful the Carter administration had been in taking this approach, he replied that it had made "some modest" progress "toward elimination of death squads" in El Salvador.

"I think it's clear that now, that after 3½ years, things are much worse, the guerrillas are much stronger," and "the middle has been undermined, and is much weaker."

Asked if he would intervene militarily to prevent a communist takeover in the region, Mondale said he would consider doing so only if "a Cuban or Russian military facility" were involved.

STAT